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BOOK REVIEWS

THE SALON AND ENGLISH LETTERS. CHAPTERS ON THE INTERRELATIONS OF LITERATURE AND SOCIETY IN THE AGE OF JOHNSON. By Chauncey Brewster Tinker. New York: The Macmillan Co. 1915. Pp. 290, illustrated; index; \$2.25.

The age of Johnson, though perhaps less productive in the field of pure literature than most others, is one of peculiar charm because of the unusual, almost unique, human interest forever attached to it by such books as Boswell's great biography, Macaulay's scarcely less great epitome, and Fanny Burney's Diary, and because of the personal charm of such men as Johnson and Goldsmith. Professor Tinker, in his new volume on *The Salon and English Letters*, has viewed it from a new angle; and though it can scarcely be said that he has made any positive addition to our store of information, he has at least written a book both suggestive and informing, and withal entertaining.

The main idea of the book is to show how the personal social relation, especially as developed in the English adaptation of the French salon, contributed to the formation of certain types of literature, especially biography and letter writing as we find it in the unsurpassed masterpieces of the eighteenth century. Four chapters are devoted to the French salon, discussing its origin and character in a manner at once scholarly and pleasing. Though the customary minutiae of the graduation thesis are eschewed, it is fair to say that Professor Tinker has given adequate detail and references to substantiate his statements and his conclusions. In this field, of course, he has had many predecessors; the only part of it in which we get rather more than a summary of other books is in a chapter on English authors in Parisian salons. Here the chief figures are Walpole, Gibbon, Hume, and Sterne, leaving out of account the "voyage imaginaire" to the salons by the gifted imagination of Goldsmith—it does not harm us or him that he should have fabricated a good part, or the whole, of his experiences. In comment upon these chapters, particularly the last, one may say that it does not appear that the salon of Paris had any considerable influence upon any of these men save Walpole.

The very title of the second part of the book is apt to awaken the spirit of controversy, if not of contradiction. Was there, in truth, such a thing as an English salon? I confess that to me the attempts of sundry literary ladies to imitate the French salon seem such lamentable failures that I prefer affirming outright that the salon did not exist. I believe we cannot go far wrong in saying that the different tone of English society,—whether we guess that the difference arises from the national boorishness and lack of urbanity of the English, or from the native spirit of independence which makes good in greater vigor what we lose in polish,—made it as impossible to establish a true and live salon as it has ever been to establish an Academy to give laws to English literature. Such a salon as Mrs. Montagu's, upon which Professor Tinker has a chapter, either gathers the mere nonentities of letters, or the mere society dilettanti, or becomes another way of administering patronage to such authors as will discreetly flatter the lady of the salon. It surely does nothing to stimulate letters through the mutual criticism and emulation that mark the true salon. In justice to the author it should be said that he is aware of the limitations of the quasi-salon established in England, and does not claim too much; and in these chapters we renew acquaintance in pleasant fashion with several of those literary ladies whose tiny lights once shone so fair, and with some, like Lady Mary and Fanny Burney, whose light still shines.

The third section of the book, being chiefly about such brilliant talkers and writers as Johnson, Fanny Burney, and Walpole, is less for the specialist and more for the reader who will enjoy a review of such truly living personages. Here the author makes apparent the full force of that social spirit which is but *nominis umbra* about the Mermaid tavern, which is the unfailing charm about the work of Boswell and of the great diarist and letter writer. Professor Tinker writes with grace, and more than once with an epigrammatic snap, as when he remarks: "I cannot but feel that Chesterfield liked the salon. What else in heaven or earth was there for such a man to like?" But the reviewer will be pardoned for suggesting that, particularly in the last portion of the book, there is too little definiteness or positiveness in enforcing his conclusions; with all regard for the

critic's duty in the way of restraint and cautious judgment, I think he would have done better to follow somewhat more the forthright, dogmatic old Doctor whom he writes of, who so loudly enunciated and so vigorously upheld his judgments whether right or wrong. In his comments upon Boswell or upon Johnson the author is clear and just; in his effort to make the reader appreciate what value he would place upon the salon and the social influence, he seems less happy. **PIERCE BUTLER.**

BEYOND DISILLUSION. A DRAMATIC STUDY OF MODERN MARRIAGE. By William Norman Guthrie. The Petrus Stuyvesandt Book Guild at St. Mark's-in-the-Bouwerie, Manhattan.

Holy matrimony, which was commended of Saint Paul to be honorable among all men, has received scant honor at the hands of many modern playwrights. The present drama, however, attempts a defence of the institution and a solution of its problems. A brilliant architect, harassed by the worries of a domesticity which includes four noisy children, and obliged to do work which does not satisfy his artistic ideals, determines to leave children and wife. To the latter he confesses that she no longer represents the ideal which he once found in her. Later in the play, the wife too deserts the children that she may become a dancer. In the last act the husband sees the wife dance to the music of his own composing and finds that she again expresses his ideal. So after both have independently discovered their ideals in different spheres of activity, they are reunited in love and return to domesticity.

In the Foreword the author suggests that a bridegroom and a bride should be respectively "prepared, nay, passionately eager, to be crucified on the cross which the other should represent, because of a holy devotion to the ideal of fellowship and loyalty, and the devout hope of offspring better than themselves and of a nobler civilization to supersede that of their generation." The characters in the present play are not willing to suffer such crucifixion. It is rather a begging of the question to settle it as the author does. He admits indeed in the Foreword that he has "resorted to what may seem an improbable solution of his problem, thinking it far less serious to be taxed with improba-